**Amendments to the Claims**:

Claims 1-21 **(Cancelled)**

22. **(New)** A ratchet wrench comprising:

a housing including a first annular hold portion and a second annular hold portion spaced apart from said first annular hold portion;

a shank held between said first annular hold portion and said second annular hold portion, said shank including a base portion and a tool-engagement portion connected to said base portion, said base portion comprising a large-diameter portion and a small-diameter portion smaller in diameter than said large-diameter portion;

an annular spring mounted to said housing to impart frictional force to said shank; and

a spring-protecting guide member mounted on said shank, said annular spring being mounted in said spring-protecting guide member;

wherein a hold member is secured to said small-diameter portion of said shank and holds said annular spring and said spring-protecting guide member on said shank, such that said annular spring provides a biasing force between said shank and said hold member;

wherein said first annular hold portion has a first central opening therethrough, said first central opening having a size and shape to allow said large-diameter portion of said shank to pass therethrough;

wherein said second annular hold portion has a second central opening therethrough, said second central opening having a size and shape to prevent said large-diameter portion of said shank from passing therethrough, such that said shank is prevented from dropping out of said housing through said second central opening of said second annular hold portion;

wherein said spring-protecting guide member has a central through-hole sized and shaped to allow said tool-engagement portion and said small-diameter portion of said shank to pass

therethrough and to prevent said large-diameter portion of said shank from passing therethrough; and

wherein a drop-out preventing member is secured to said first annular hold portion and arranged to prevent said shank from dropping out of said housing through said first central opening of said first annular hold portion.

23. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

said first annular hold portion has a recess formed therein; and

an abrasion-preventing member is provided in said recess to obstruct contact between said first annular hold portion and said large-diameter portion of said shank.

24. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 23, wherein

said abrasion-preventing member has an annular shape with a central hole therethrough; and

said large-diameter portion includes a projection fitted in said central hole of said abrasion-preventing member.

25. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 23, wherein

a rotation-preventing member is provided between said abrasion-preventing member and said first annular hold portion, said rotation-preventing member being arranged to prevent rotation of said abrasion-preventing member with respect to said first annular hold portion.

26. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

said housing comprises a heat-treated housing;

said first annular hold portion has a recess formed therein; and

said large-diameter portion of said shank is fitted in said recess such that said large-diameter portion of said shank directly contacts said first annular hold portion.

27. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

an annular groove is formed in an inner side wall of said first annular hold portion; and

said drop-out preventing member comprises a snap ring secured in said annular groove.

28. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

a rotation-preventing member is provided between said spring-protecting guide member and said first annular hold portion of said housing to prevent rotation of said spring-protecting guide member with respect to said first annular hold portion.

29. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

said spring-protecting guide member is formed to include an inner cylindrical wall, and outer cylindrical wall, and an annular end wall spanning between said inner and outer cylindrical walls; and

said annular spring is disposed in a space defined between said inner cylindrical wall, said outer cylindrical wall, and said annular end wall of said spring-protecting guide member.

30. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, further comprising

a first washer disposed between said spring-protecting guide member and said large-diameter portion of said shank; and

a second washer is disposed between said annular spring and said locking member.

31. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

said annular spring is constituted by one of an annular wave spring and an annular disc spring.

32. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

27. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

an annular groove is formed in an inner side wall of said first annular hold portion; and

said drop-out preventing member comprises a snap ring secured in said annular groove.

28. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

a rotation-preventing member is provided between said spring-protecting guide member and said first annular hold portion of said housing to prevent rotation of said spring-protecting guide member with respect to said first annular hold portion.

29. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

said spring-protecting guide member is formed to include an inner cylindrical wall, and outer cylindrical wall, and an annular end wall spanning between said inner and outer cylindrical walls; and

said annular spring is disposed in a space defined between said inner cylindrical wall, said outer cylindrical wall, and said annular end wall of said spring-protecting guide member.

30. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, further comprising

a first washer disposed between said spring-protecting guide member and said large-diameter portion of said shank; and

a second washer is disposed between said annular spring and said locking member.

31. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

said annular spring is constituted by one of an annular wave spring and an annular disc spring.

32. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 22, wherein

said hold member is configured so as to not protrude outwardly beyond an outer surface of either of said first and second annular hold portions.

33. **(New)** A ratchet wrench according to claim 32, wherein

said hold member comprises a locking pin disposed in a transverse through-hole formed in said base portion of said shank.